

**City of Fort Lauderdale
Community Services Board
March 9, 2015 – 4:00 P.M.
City Commission Chambers – City Hall
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301**

October 2014-September 2015

MEMBERS		PRESENT	ABSENT
Wendy Gonsher, Chair	P	5	0
Benjamin Bean	P	5	0
Mark Fillers	P	4	1
Wanda Francis	P	5	0
Nicholas Gattozi	P	1	0
Gwendolyn Haynes	P	2	2
Jason King	P	3	2
Chris Lovell	P	5	0
Richard Morris	P	1	0
Fred Roccanti	P	5	0
Jasmin Shirley	P	5	0
Noah Szugajew	P	3	0
Joseph S. Van de Bogart	P	4	0

Staff Present

Mario DeSantis, Liaison and Housing Administrator
Jonathan Brown, Housing and Community Development Manager
Marcia Gair, Administrative Aide
Jamie Opperee, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communication to City Commission

None.

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

- **Quorum Requirement: As of February 26, 2015, there are 12 appointed members to the Board, which means 7 constitutes a quorum**

Chair Gonsher called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

II. WELCOME / BOARD AND STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

New Board member Nicholas Gattozi introduced himself at this time.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – FEBRUARY 9, 2015

Motion made by Ms. Francis, seconded by Mr. Fillers, to approve. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

New Board member Richard Morris arrived at 4:03 p.m. and introduced himself at this time.

IV. CDBG UPDATE

Chair Gonsler noted that as there are only six agencies requesting Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, it will not be necessary for the Board to hold two meetings for the purpose of hearing presentations. All presentations will be made at the regular meeting held on April 13, 2015. Scoring will need to be completed by Friday, April 17, and sent to Mr. Brown for compilation and discussion at the April 20 meeting, where the Board will make funding recommendations for the CDBG program.

Mr. Brown noted that the Board will also discuss the agencies' performance indicators at the April 20 meeting, and asked that the members review these indicators prior to that meeting.

Mr. Brown advised that the members were provided with scorecards for the three current CDBG agencies: Broward Partnership for the Homeless, Women in Distress, and Jack and Jill Children's Center. He explained that while these agencies may appear to be behind on their spending, this was because the City Commission had approved additional funds for them in December 2014. Staff will continue to monitor spending and provide updates to the Board.

Chair Gonsler clarified that members should send their summary score sheets via email to Mr. Brown's office by April 17 for compilation, and to bring printed copies of their individual score sheets to the April 20 meeting.

The Board briefly discussed the current agencies' tracking information, with Mr. Brown noting that it is not unusual for a lag to exist in these agencies' ability to track the number of clients served until they receive documentation from clients and submit this information for reimbursement.

V. HOPWA UPDATE

Mr. DeSantis stated that funding for the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program has been reduced from \$7.7 million the previous year to roughly \$6.5 million in 2015, which is a greater reduction than anticipated. He noted that the costs of the tenant-based and project-based voucher programs are fixed dollar amounts that must be covered first, as there are no time limits on how long existing clients may remain on these programs. The short-term rent/mortgage/utilities (STRMU) and permanent housing placement (PHP) programs are more fluid, as specific dollar amounts are not associated with individual clients and their leases or rents.

Mr. DeSantis reviewed the previous year's expenditures among all agencies for each program, which are broken down into total expenditures, subsidies by payment, and administrative/operation costs. He provided a handout with these figures for the Board members, clarifying that a total of \$8.1 million was allocated the previous year due to \$300,000 in funds left over. If funds are rolled over in the future, they will be brought back before the Board for separate allocation from the funds provided by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Chair Gonsler recalled that the Board had previously discussed the changing philosophy of the HOPWA program and the corresponding adjustment in distribution of funds to reflect this change. Mr. DeSantis advised that there is the possibility of HOPWA funds following a more project-based model in the future, in which individuals enter a program, are stabilized, and then move off the program; individuals who have medical issues and are more dependent upon the program are moved onto the tenant-based voucher program.

Mr. DeSantis concluded that funds will also be reduced for the next two years of the RFP; for this reason, the Board cannot depend upon the availability of rollover funds in the future. He is also awaiting confirmation of whether or not agencies will be able to allocate 10% of their funding toward administrative costs.

Mr. Lovell asked if the Board could begin moving toward a project-based housing model by allocating funds to agencies that provide or are moving toward this type of program. Mr. Brown cautioned against taking any such action before final decisions are made by HUD with regard to how funding is provided.

Mr. Brown continued that while the previous year's budget was allocated among agencies that were participating in a three-year agreement, the new RFP will mean all agencies that seek funding will have to compete for it. It was clarified that more budget cuts will come from the types of programs that HOPWA is moving away from, while other programs, such as the tenant-based voucher program, will see less significant decreases, as existing clients must have sufficient funds to continue living in their units. Mr. DeSantis added that the tenant-based voucher program has been asked not to fill any vacancies in the future without authorization.

Chair Gonsler expressed concern that the funding allocated for supportive services, such as legal assistance and case management, will eventually disappear as all funds are allocated to voucher programs. Mr. DeSantis replied that any program changes the Board makes must be accompanied by a written policy and must be adhered to in every way in order to maintain fair housing. If the Board wishes to impose a time limit in which clients may be served by a given program, a start time for this limit must be determined, and clients with long-term dependence upon HOPWA programs must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. DeSantis advised that if the Board wished to limit clients' time in the tenant-based voucher program, this request would be sent to HUD in writing and he would seek additional guidance on this possibility. He stated that if there is no other written policy for HOPWA to follow, it defaults to Section 8 Housing Choice rules and regulations.

Mr. Fillers stated that he would like to hear the opinion of Legal Aid or a similar agency regarding whether or not time limits may be imposed upon the tenant-based voucher program by a procedural change. Mr. Brown confirmed that the City may put forth any policy changes it wishes to make on City-administered programs.

Patrice Paldino, representing Legal Aid of Broward County, commented that she did not necessarily agree that the City could impose time limits on the tenant-based voucher program. Her opinion was that if HOPWA regulations do not address a specific issue or item, that issue is deferred to Section 8 regulations; under these guidelines, the tenant-based voucher program is considered an entitlement and clients may remain on it indefinitely. Mr. DeSantis advised that this is why any such policy change would be sent to HUD for a decision. Mr. Brown added that he would be hesitant to take this step unless directed to do so by the City Commission, as it would represent a major change in policy.

Motion made by Mr. King, seconded by Ms. Francis, to send a communication to the City Commission to recommend to the City that the Commission advise Staff to make the inquiry to HUD about how to go about making this procedural change regarding the tenant-based vouchers, or if it is even possible.

Mr. Morris asked if it would be possible, before making a recommendation of this nature to the City, to conduct an analysis on the potential ramifications of this change. Mr. Brown observed that the result would not be a change in costs, but a change in clients over time, as existing clients are moved off the voucher program and new clients are moved onto it. He noted that because HOPWA has been a volatile issue in the past, the City Commission is likely to want clear information on why the Board is considering a policy change.

Chair Gonsler pointed out that there is no immediate need to make the proposed policy change, and recommended that the Board provide a statement of what they have discussed, including decreasing overall allocations and the possibility that over time the HOPWA program will become a voucher program with no funding left over for supportive services. Ms. Shirley proposed that Staff look at examples from other cities to determine whether or not they offer time-limited programs in the tenant-based voucher category.

Mr. DeSantis noted that there is currently a waiting list of 900 individuals seeking acceptance to the tenant-based voucher program, while the number of individuals moving from this program to self-sufficiency remains low. He estimated that a

substantial number of participants in this program receive income from Social Security income (SSI) or Social Security disability insurance (SSDI).

Mr. King **restated** his **motion** as follows: **motion** to recommend to the City that the City make the inquiry to HUD on whether or not these procedures can be changed regarding the tenant-based rental voucher, and that change is precisely to implement, through whatever procedure is dictated, the eligibility time limit.

In a roll call vote, the **motion** failed 6-7 (Chair Gonsher, Mr. Bean, Ms. Francis, Ms. Haynes, Mr. Lovell, Mr. Morris, and Ms. Shirley dissenting).

Chair Gonsher asked how the funding cut to legal services would affect the provision of these services. Ms. Paldino replied that legal services were previously included under the category of supportive services; however, legal services are now in a separate category that receives the largest funding cut, which she characterized as disproportionate.

Motion made by Mr. Fillers, seconded by Mr. Roccanti, for those things that are commitments, which is [inaudible], those remain; the balance of the funds of the organization share equally in the projected reduction.

Mr. DeSantis cautioned that if programs such as tenant-based, facility-based, or project-based housing are cut, there will be a proportionately greater need for supportive services, such as housing case management and legal services.

Ms. Shirley requested clarification of the services provided by legal services that affect a client's housing. Ms. Paldino replied that services include meeting with tenants when considering a lease, reviewing property records, reviewing leases for any potential issues, advising clients on their rights in the event that conditions degrade, and representing clients at termination or collection hearings, among other issues that affect an individual's housing and stability.

Mr. Fillers **restated** his **motion** as follows: that for the year 15/16, the amount to be allocated would be the total less the \$817[,000] and the \$2.3 million, which are commitments, the balance would be distributed across the other agencies in a fair percentage reduction as from the year 14/15 to 15/16.

In a voice vote, the **motion** failed 1-12 (Chair Gonsher, Mr. Bean, Ms. Francis, Mr. Gattozzi, Ms. Haynes, Mr. King, Mr. Lovell, Mr. Morris, Mr. Roccanti, Ms. Shirley, Mr. Szugajew, and Mr. Van de Bogart dissenting).

Motion made by Mr. Lovell, seconded by Mr. King, to agree with Staff recommendations for project-based, STRMU, and tenant-based allocations, and that we combine the remaining balance of the proposed allocation to other facility-based housing, case management, and legal service RFPs afterward for review.

Mr. Brown pointed out that RFPs must include a funding amount.

Mr. Lovell **withdrew** his **motion**.

Motion made by Chair Gonsher to approve the Staff recommendations for all but the two housing case management and legal services, and that those reductions be done proportionately if you view them as one category.

She further explained that of the total \$84,000 reduction for these two items, approximately two-thirds of the reduction would come from housing case management and one-third from legal services.

Mr. DeSantis advised that if these two types of services are combined into a single category, the legal services provider should be required to handle all HOPWA data entry. He asserted that agencies may no longer depend upon HOPWA grant funding as the sole source of funds for a position, and must find a way to leverage their dollars.

The **motion** died from lack of second.

Motion made by Mr. Fillers, seconded by Ms. Shirley, to accept the proposal as stated by the City.

Mr. Roccanti asked if it might be possible to allocate any leftover funds from the previous year to make up the shortfall in funding for legal services, as he agreed the shortfall in this budget was disproportionate. Mr. Brown advised that this could be brought back to the Board at a later time.

In a roll call vote, the **motion** failed 6-7 (Chair Gonsher, Mr. Gattozzi, Mr. King, Mr. Lovell, Mr. Roccanti, Mr. Szugajew, and Mr. Van de Bogart dissenting).

Mr. Lovell suggested that representatives of agencies affected by the budget cuts be allowed to discuss the impact of these proposed reductions on their services. Mr. Brown reiterated that although representatives of some agencies were present at the meeting, no agencies have been awarded any funds in fiscal year 2015/16 thus far. He added that if no decision is made at this time, the HOPWA RFP will be further delayed, which could mean funding would not be available by October 1, 2015.

VI. GOOD OF THE ORDER

None.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

VIII. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

Motion made by Mr. Fillers to schedule a special session to address just this issue within the next two weeks.

Chair Gonsher requested that the following **amendment** be added to the **motion**: to provide notice to the agencies so they can reflect not on what it means to their agency but how that will affect the service delivery.

Mr. King **seconded** the **amended motion**.

In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

It was determined that if a meeting room is available, the special meeting would be held on Monday, March 16, 2015.

Chair Gonsher requested that Staff provide the Board with FY 2014/15 funding allocations for services, divided by category.

IX. COMMUNICATIONS TO CITY COMMISSION

It was noted that there was no communication to the City Commission at this time, as the motion to send a communication had failed 6-7.

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 5:59 p.m.

Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]